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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4681
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2668
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4079
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9818
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0931
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 0293
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1164
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: TIBETAN REFUGEE JUNE 2 UPDATE

REF: 05 KATHMANDU 2633

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

GON To Resume Issuance of Exit Permits

11. (C) A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Nepal representative told Emboff June 1 that the Home Ministry had indicated that the Government of Nepal (GON) would resume issuing exit permits for Tibetan refugees transiting Nepal from Tibet to India. The previous government stopped issuing exit permits in November 2005 (reftel). The Indian Embassy continues to issue entrance permits and Tibetans continue to transit Nepal to India without the full legal protection of exit permits, the UNHCR representative noted, adding that 450 Tibetans had departed the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC) in Kathmandu in May for India, and 200 more Tibetans had arrived. As of June 2, there were 198 people at the TRC waiting to transit to India.

Six Tibetans Arrested Going to Tibet

12. (C) On May 31, the GON arrested six Tibetans with improper documents coming into Kathmandu from India. The six had transited through the TRC to India after 1990 and under the GON's gentleman's agreement with UNHCR were not eligible to return to Nepal. The GON charged the six with immigration violations. UNHCR visited the six on June 1 and noted that one of those arrested was returning from a ten day leave from his job as a cook at the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC) employed by Lutheran World Federation (LWF). He had been in India renewing his Indian Residency Card. The cook did not have residency papers or permission to work in Nepal. While UNHCR planned to petition the government to release the six Tibetans, they predicted that it would take time. UNHCR expected that the TRC would find donors to pay the fines, which ranged from 5,000 NRS to 30,000 NRS (70 to 420 USD) for each of the individuals.

Singing Nuns Transit Nepal

¶3. (C) The June 1 English-language daily The Himalayan Times carried a front-page article about two members of a group of political prisoners known as the "Drapchi Singing Nuns" who escaped Tibet into Nepal. The pair were reportedly among a number of nuns who were incarcerated in Tibet's Drapchi prison for secretly recording songs in 1993 about the Dalai Lama and Tibet's future that were smuggled out and reached the West. UNHCR reported that the nuns had already transited the TRC; because of safety concerns, UNHCR had expedited their processing to India. The two nuns had safely arrived in India before the International Campaign for Tibet publicly released news of their escape.

Cost Overrun on TRC Construction

¶4. (C) LWF told Emboff on June 2 that the construction of the addition to the TRC was one month behind schedule due to delays associated with the April "people's movement" and associated general strike. The contractor had completed construction of the second floor of the building and was starting on the third floor. LWF explained that the original plans had lacked electrical boxes, railings, and other items, and so LWF now predicted a 10,000 USD cost overrun for construction. LWF noted that it would need an additional 5,000 USD to furnish the completed building. LWF was unsure where these additional funds would come from and whether construction could be completed by September 2006 without an influx of funds. LWF was tendering the additional items and planned to approach donors with the exact shortfall cost once calculated.

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